

# Memorandum



Date: April 5, 2004

To: Golden Gate Division

From: **DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL**  
San Francisco Area

File No.: 335.09550

Subject: UNUSUAL INCIDENT AFTER ACTION REPORT  
SUICIDAL SUBJECT ON SAN FRANCISCO/OAKLAND BAY BRIDGE

## 1. INCIDENT SUMMARY

### a. Summary:

On April 2, 2004, at approximately 1023 hours, Golden Gate Communications Center received a call of a man over the Bridge rail and about to jump off the upper deck of westbound I-80 (San Francisco/Oakland Bay Bridge), east of Yerba Buena Island. Multiple San Francisco Area units responded to the scene and located a red 1991 BMW abandoned in the #1 traffic lane. The distraught male, later identified as Farhad Ajir, 38 years of age from Carmichael, California, was located over the south Bridge rail and perched on an approximately 6-inch wide steel beam. Mr. Ajir was visibly agitated and threatened to jump. Mr. Ajir was in possession of a razor blade and was mutilating his arm. The San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) crisis negotiator team was requested, responded, and communicated with Mr. Ajir for the next several hours.

Shortly after 2300 hours, Mr. Ajir appeared to be visibly tired and suffering from hypothermia. Mr. Ajir moved to a triangular support beam on the Bridge structure and began to lie down. Fearing for Mr. Ajir's untreated injuries, hypothermia exposure, and the high probability of falling off the Bridge structure due to fatigue, members of the California Highway Patrol (CHP) Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) attempted to rescue Mr. Ajir. Mr. Ajir struggled with and resisted the officers, which necessitated the use of less than lethal force. Mr. Ajir was subsequently subdued, handcuffed, safety harnessed, and pulled to safety over the Bridge rail. All traffic lanes were restored at approximately 0032 hours.

b. Response:

San Francisco Area units were dispatched and responded to the scene. Unit 32-Z1, Officer D. Walton was the first unit on scene and established communications with Mr. Ajir. Sergeant P. Grant responded to the scene and assumed incident command responsibilities. Several arriving officers secured the #1 and #2 lanes for emergency personnel and support apparatus. The Traffic Management Center was notified and issued a Sig-Alert. Golden Gate Division made initial notifications to Assistant Commissioner, Field and The State Warning Center. The U. S. Coast Guard, paramedics, San Francisco Fire Department, and California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) also responded to the scene. SFPD crisis negotiators were requested and responded to the Bridge at approximately 1120 hours to assist with negotiation efforts. The crisis negotiators communicated with Mr. Ajir for the next several hours.

In mid-afternoon both the Oakland Police Department (OPD) SWAT Deputy Chief and SFPD SWAT Deputy Chief were contacted to ascertain the possibility of responding to the scene to remove Mr. Ajir. Both agencies related that their protocol was not to deploy SWAT personnel as long as negotiations were taking place.

At approximately 1617 hours, the #2 lane was re-opened for vehicular traffic. Media inquiries were handled by both Division and Area Public Affairs Officers. Departmental aircraft Air-31 was also dispatched to the scene to provide traffic updates and direct media aircraft away from the immediate area. San Francisco Captain M. Rasmussen and Golden Gate Division Assistant Chief P. Burnett, were notified and responded to the scene, where they contacted Area Lieutenant R. Phifer. H-30 was also dispatched to provide aerial support.

At approximately 1730 hours, a request for CHP SWAT response was made and approved through the Office of the Commissioner. At that time Chief Noble indicated to Chief Wilson that the SWAT team was necessary in order to conduct a rescue mission since the armed suspect was bleeding heavily and therefore was in danger of losing consciousness and falling to his death. Chief Wilson agreed that this was a mission that SWAT could perform.

SWAT officers were notified of the call-out (some officers were off-duty and traveled from their residences) and responded to the CHP Academy to gather necessary equipment. After gathering equipment and changing into their uniforms, the team responded through heavy traffic congestion to the scene, arriving at approximately 2050 hours. At approximately 2205 hours, Deputy Chief D. Wilson and Assistant Commissioner, Field, M. Nivens also arrived to oversee the rescue operations.

In addition to departmental responses, the following support elements were also present:

San Francisco Police Department (SFPD)  
San Francisco Fire Department (SFFD)  
Oakland Fire Department (OFD)  
American Medical Response (AMR)  
California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)  
U. S. Coast Guard

c. Operations:

At approximately 2300 hours, three CHP SWAT members rappelled over the side of the San Francisco/Oakland Bay Bridge. The three SWAT officers confronted Mr. Ajir, who was combative, and a violent struggle ensued. This confrontation necessitated the use of less than lethal rounds being fired at Mr. Ajir. The use of less than lethal rounds proved to be effective. As a result of the extraordinary and heroic efforts of the three SWAT members, Mr. Ajir was placed in custody. Mr. Ajir was transported to Highland Hospital in Oakland and treated for his self-inflicted injuries. Following his medical treatment and clearance, he was transported to San Francisco General Hospital and admitted and booked into the psychiatric jail ward. Mr. Ajir was charged with 69 PC (threaten or use violence against a public officer), 148 PC (resisting), 602(l) PC (trespassing), 2800(a) VC. (failure to obey), 23253 VC (disobeying order), 23331 VC (pedestrian on bridge), 23332 VC (trespassing on bridge), and 23333 VC (stopping on bridge). Officer Walton, the investigating/arresting officer, will prepare the arrest report.

d. Recovery/Demobilization:

There were no injuries to CHP or allied agency staff. There were no damages or loss of departmental equipment or state property as a result of this operation. The three SWAT members who arrested Mr. Ajir, however, were exposed to his blood during the physical arrest. Appropriate communicable disease exposure protocol was initiated.

The Command Post was deactivated at 0032 hours. All units were released from the scene at that time.

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

e. Statistical Summaries:

(1) Staffing/Hours Expended

Classification	Number	Regular Time	Overtime	Total Time
Assistant Commissioner	1	8		8
Deputy Chief	1	8		8
Assistant Chief	1	12		12
Captain	1	14		14
Lieutenant	1	10		10
Sergeant	4	18	13	31
Officer	30	76	40	116
Public Safety Dispatcher	2	13		13
Total	41	159	53	212

Note that these totals include all personnel involved in this incident, including SWAT and Air staffing.

(2) Miles driven:

Approximately 220 miles, the vast majority of it involving SWAT response from the Sacramento area.

(3) Aircraft Operational Hours

In response to this incident, H30 accrued 1 hour of actual flight time. H4 accrued 1:12 of flight time. Air 31 had 7:16 of flight time.

(4) Arrests:

The subject was booked into the San Francisco General Hospital Psychiatric Jail Ward. He was charged with 69 PC (Threaten or Use Violence Against a Public Officer), 148 PC (Resisting), 602 (L) PC (Trespassing), 2800(A) VC (Failure to Obey), 23253 (Disobeying Order), 23331 VC (Trespassing on Bridge), and 23333 VC (Stopping on Bridge).

(5) Equipment Expended / Lost / Destroyed:

One less than lethal round was utilized during the SWAT rescue operation. There was no lost or damaged equipment.

## OPERATIONAL CRITIQUE

### a. Lessons Learned:

- Golden Gate Division personnel, coupled with SWAT, collectively demonstrated their ability to successfully mitigate this incident.
- Whenever possible, no more than one lane should be closed for such events. While closure of one lane of traffic was unavoidable, once stabilization of the scene was obtained, efforts should have immediately been made to return traffic flow to the westbound # 2 lane. When this lane was opened at the direction of Assistant Chief Burnett at approximately 1600 hours, traffic flow on the SFOBB was improved. This issue will be discussed with management and supervisory staff at Area.
- Initial deployment of officers specifically assigned for traffic control and congestion mitigation was limited. Once staffing was increased for this role, at the direction of Assistant Chief Burnett, the impact upon traffic was decreased.
- During the initial stages of incident, no management personnel from Area were at the scene. Once the Commander and Division Assistant Chief arrived at the scene, operational issues were more quickly and efficiently addressed. Upon recognizing the gravity of the incident, Golden Gate Division should have escalated the level of scene management to the rank of Assistant Chief.

### b. Recommendations:

- The benefit of SWAT personnel arriving on scene as soon as possible will facilitate the development of a plan to mitigate the incident.
- The number of public safety response units on scene should be kept to a minimum during future events and reduced as the scene stabilizes.
- Placement of visual screens at the scene should be considered so that activities of public safety personnel and equipment have minimal impact upon traffic flow.
- Request a study to develop and produce a device to ensnare suicidal individuals using technologies similar to those developed at Lawrence Livermore Nuclear Laboratory.

- Ensure better use of the Transportation Management Center to:
  - Advise other transportation agencies (San Francisco Airport, Bay Area Rapid Transit, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, etc.) of the incident and the possible impacts on their operations and customers.
  - Advise allied agencies of the probable impact of the incident upon feeder or connecting roadways in their cities/counties.
  - Notify public safety agencies and major medical facilities of an incident and possible impact it may have on their employees' ability to respond to work.
  - Utilize CHP Headquarters Office of Public Affairs to assist in disseminating information about traffic congestion as a result of this type of incident.



### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MANAGING FUTURE BRIDGE-RELATED EMERGENCY INCIDENTS**



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